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General and complete disarmament: small arms

Convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in paragraph 3 (a) of its resolution 53/77 E of 4 December 1998, entitled "Small arms", had requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of all Member States on the objective, scope, agenda, dates and venue of and preparatory work for an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects and to take into account those views as well as the views already expressed by them in their previous replies to the request of the Secretary-General for their views in accordance with paragraph 4 of Assembly resolution 52/38 J of 9 December 1997.

2. In pursuance of that request, a note verbale dated 20 January 1999 was addressed to all Member States inviting them to provide information on the subject. The replies of Member States were made available in the report of the Secretary-General dated 20 August 1999 (A/54/260).

3. On 15 December 1999, by its resolution 54/54 V, entitled "Small arms", the General Assembly decided to establish a preparatory committee for the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, open to participation by all States, which would hold no fewer than three sessions, the first session to be held in New York from 28 February to 3 March 2000.

4. In paragraph 8 of the same resolution, the General Assembly invited all Member States, in particular those that had not yet done so, in response to the Secretary-General's note verbale dated 20 January 1999, to communicate to the Secretary-General their views on the agenda and other relevant questions relating to the Conference. In paragraph 9, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to transmit the replies of Member States relevant to paragraph 8 to the Preparatory Committee.

5. In pursuance of paragraph 8 of resolution 54/54 V, a note verbale dated 31 January 2000 was transmitted to all Member States inviting them, if they had not done so, to communicate their views to the Secretary-General at the earliest possible date, and preferably by 18 February 2000. The replies of Member States received to date are included in section II of the present addendum.

II. Replies received from Governments

Argentina

[Original: Spanish]
[23 February 2000]

A priority objective of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects should be to strengthen or formulate norms for combating the illicit trade and manufacture of small arms and light weapons and to promote a sense of responsibility among States with regard to the export, import and transit of these weapons. Argentina believes that this goal can be achieved relatively easily since the international community is aware of the need to supplement individual and regional efforts with global measures. In this respect Argentina supports the suggestions made in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms (A/54/258, part V).

It would also be important for the Conference to analyse the measures already adopted at the regional level, for example, the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials, the model regulations for the control of the international movement of firearms, their parts, components and ammunition, adopted by the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission of the Organization of American States, and the Declaration signed by the Presidents of the member States of the Common Market of the Southern Cone, and of Bolivia and Chile, in April 1998, on the basis of which it was agreed that a joint register mechanism of buyers and sellers of those items would be created.

Another measure which the Conference should promote is the early entry into force of the protocol on firearms of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime which would establish, *inter alia*, a centralized international register on the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in firearms, ammunition, explosives and related materials.

It would be desirable for individual States to align their legislation with the conclusions and recommendations which emerge from this Conference and to establish the foundations for the effective implementation of internationally agreed mechanisms for greater cooperation in this area. In this respect, it is essential for the Conference to encourage true coordination of policies and efforts and the harmonization of national legislation.

It could be useful to request Member States to make available to the Preparatory Committee a copy of their national provisions on the regulation, registration and control of firearms, and to indicate whether they possess a computerized national system of data on firearms, and also the controls placed on arms exports and imports and the checks made before releasing them into the market.

It would also be worth requesting Member States to provide to the Preparatory Committee, if available, statistics on offences or crimes committed with small arms or light weapons, hostile activities in their territories, and patterns of crime, specifying the type of weapons held by risk groups, etc.

Canada

[Original: English]
[18 February 2000]

Canada views the decision of the General Assembly in paragraph 1 of resolution 54/54 V to convene the Conference as important to further aid and enhance international efforts to deal effectively with the problems posed by the excessive and destabilizing accumulations and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons. In Canada's view, a successful outcome for the Conference would be the acceptance of a meaningful action plan, with a timetable for implementation, that will actually reduce the numbers of small arms and light weapons in circulation throughout the world, prevent problematic transfers, promote transparency and reduce the role of small arms and light weapons in undermining human security through exacerbating armed conflict, perpetrating gross violations of human rights and destabilizing societies.

The action plan accepted at the Conference should: (a) include "supply-side" measures, these principally being agreed standards for State behaviour, as well as assistance in implementing them at the global, regional and national levels; (b) include "demand-side" measures, which are generally initiatives designed to help affected States and regions to collect and destroy existing and unwanted small arms and light weaponry from their territories and communities; (c) promote responsibility and restraint by States with regard to the export, import, transfer and production of small arms and light weapons; (d) develop agreed norms for the security and the safe management of stockpiles of small arms and light weapons held by State authorities or State-authorized authorities; and (e) elaborate a universal norm that calls for the destruction of all small arms that States or State-authorized entities have seized or confiscated as a result of interdicting illicit traffic or collected through disarmament and demobilization activities and/or are held by States or State-authorized entities in excess of legitimate defence needs.

Canada believes that the scope of the Conference should cover all aspects of the problems associated with the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons. In particular, the Preparatory Committee of the Conference should not limit itself to the illicit transfers of small arms and light weapons, but should recognize in its work the interrelationship that exists between illicit trafficking and the licit trade in small arms and light weapons. In this respect, the work of the Preparatory Committee and of the Conference itself should not duplicate the ongoing work in the context of the Economic and Social Council to elaborate a protocol to combat the illicit manufacturing of and illicit trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Indeed, Canada views the work of the Preparatory Committee and the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime as being complementary and mutually reinforcing.

Canada notes that the responsibility of setting the agenda and timetable for the Conference will fall to the Preparatory Committee. Canada's view is that the Preparatory Committee should identify as the primary agenda item for the Conference the acceptance of the meaningful action plan, with timetable for implementation, referred to above. This means that the principal task of the Preparatory Committee will be to develop the action plan in time for its acceptance at the Conference. Canada is committed to contribute and participate during the Preparatory Committee process to help ensure that the Preparatory Committee can achieve this important objective.

Canada encourages non-governmental organizations and representatives of civil society to take an active interest in the preparatory process. In this respect, Canada supports an active role for civil society and believes that representatives of civil society should have appropriate opportunities to convey their views and perspectives to the Preparatory Committee and ultimately to the Conference itself.

Thailand

[Original: English]
[22 February 2000]

Thailand supports the convening of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in 2001 and views the Conference as an opportunity for the consideration of international action/measures to tackle the problems of the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons in a more systematic manner. Thailand hopes that the Conference will be able to reach tangible measures or at least a joint political declaration regarding this problem.

Although the problem of small arms has a multifaceted dimension involving security and disarmament, as well as law enforcement, the objective and scope of the Conference should focus only on the illicit aspect of the problems of small arms and related issues rather than issues that have already been discussed in the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, including the draft protocol on firearms. In this connection, Thailand wishes to propose the following agenda to be discussed at the 2001 Conference:

- The prevention and eradication of the illicit production, trade and transfer of small arms, bearing in mind the sovereignty of States in protecting national security;
- National mechanisms and international cooperation in solving the problems of small arms.

Thailand welcomes the offer by Switzerland to host the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. However, in selecting the venue of the Conference, it is imperative to ensure the widest possible and effective participation in the Conference in 2001, as stipulated in paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 54/54 V.